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Safety in Bear Country - Procedures To Follow

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Avoid Attracting Bears

The Cherokee National Forest is home to about 1,500 black bears, but only a few lucky visitors will catch a glimpse of one of these reclusive nocturnal animals. Bears have a natural fear of humans that helps them survive up to 15 years in the wild. It is best for bears and for forest visitors and neighbors that a healthy respect and distance is maintained.

There are many specific things people can do to avoid attracting black bears. Good sanitation is a key to many of these. Odors attract bears to potential food items. Carefully controlling odors associated with food and products that humans use prevent bears from being conditioned to being near people. This means that we need to store food, garbage, cooking gear, and scented cosmetics (including toothpaste) where bears cannot get them. Once conditioned, a bear is dangerous. It may approach humans closely and come into camps or near homes to search for food. At this point, it may be necessary to destroy the animal.

Cabins and Residential Areas

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- Never leave unattended food or garbage outside.
- Do not feed birds between April and November



unless you use bear feeders that bears cannot reach and that have spill pans to prevent seeds from reaching the ground.

- Do not leave pet food outside (especially overnight).
- Bear-proof bee hives, compost piles, and gardens with electric or chain-link fence.
- Do not leave food as bait for any animals or leave food scraps on the ground.
- If a bear approaches, move your family and any food indoors immediately.

At Campgrounds and Picnic Areas

The Cherokee National Forest has worked with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to install bear-proof trash cans at many recreation sites. We need your help:

- Keep a clean site by properly disposing of:
 - All garbage, including fruit rinds and cores.
 - Aluminum foil (even from grills) that has been used to cook or store food.
 - Plastic wrap and bags that have stored food.
 - Cans and jars that are



empty.

- Pick up food scraps around your site.
- Never leave food or coolers unattended (unless inside a vehicle or hard-sided camper). Food storage restrictions apply in selected campgrounds: [Indian Boundary Recreation Area](#); [North River](#), and [Tellico River](#) on the [Tellico Ranger District](#).

Violations subject to citation.

- Wipe down table tops before vacating your site.
- If a bear approaches your site, pack up your food and trash. If necessary, attempt to scare the animal

away with loud shouts, by banging pans together, or even throwing rocks and sticks at it. If the bear is persistent, move away slowly to your vehicle or another secure area. [top](#)

In The Backcountry



- Hang food and anything with strong odors (toothpaste, bug repellent, soap, etc.) at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from a tree or limb, or use special food storage boxes and cable systems if available.
- Do not cook or store food in or near your tent (food odors on tent or gear may attract a bear.)
- If a bear approaches, frighten it by yelling, banging pans together, or throwing rocks.
- Do respect bears and admire them from a distance.
- Pack out trash -- don't bury it. [top](#)

Any Time You See A Bear

- Do not feed or toss food to a bear or any wild animal.
- Keep children close at hand.
- Keep pets indoors or in a vehicle or camper.
- Do not approach a bear--they are dangerous. If it changes its natural behavior (feeding, foraging, or movement) because of your presence, you are too close.
- Never surround or corner a bear.
- Never run from a bear -- back slowly away and make lots of noise.
- Encourage others to follow these instructions.
- Be responsible. Improper behavior on your part may cause the bear to die.
- In the extreme case that you are attacked by a black bear, try to fight back using any object available. Act aggressively and intimidate the bear by yelling and waving your arms. Playing dead is not appropriate. [top](#)

Hiking

- Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.



- Carry bear pepper spray.
- Read all signs at the trailhead.
- Hike in a group, keep children close at hand.
- Make your presence known (call out).
- Hike during daylight hours and stay on the trail.
- Watch for bear signs: scat, claw marks, diggings, logs or stumps torn apart, etc.
- Avoid taking pets, they may attract bears to you.

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